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Voices that Matter?

Methods for Historians Attending to the Voices of the Past

Josephine Hoegaerts

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Abstract • How do we thoroughly historicize the voice, or integrate it into our historical research, and how do we account for the mundane daily practices of voice . . . the constant talking, humming, murmuring, whispering, and mumbling that went on offstage, in living rooms, debating clubs, business meetings, and on the streets? Work across the humanities has provided us with approaches to deal with aspects of voices, vocality, and their sounds. This article considers how we can mobilize and adapt such interdisciplinary methods for the study of history. It charts out a practical approach to attend to the history of voices—including unmusical ones—before recording, drawing on insights from the fields of sound studies, musicology, and performativity. It suggests ways to “listen anew” to familiar sources as well as less conventional source material. And it insists on a combination of analytical approaches focusing on vocabulary, bodily practice, and the questionable particularity of sound.

Keywords • articulation, cultural history, history of the body, methodology, sound, voice

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E. P. Thompson . . . quotes [his sources] generously, providing readers with glimpses of the voices of a working class in the making. These quotations, the spelling often idiosyncratic, sometimes phonetic, are such that readers can almost hear these voices.¹

The metaphor of voices being suppressed, speaking to us from the past, or being given new meaning runs through historiography almost like a guiding light. Social or sociocultural historians, in particular, are concerned by the issue of whose voices end up on the historical record; over many decades, they have been steadily working to give a voice to laborers, women, ethnic others, children, the disabled, the nonhuman, and other historical actors who have traditionally been overshadowed by great White male movers and shakers. The project of uncovering these new voices carries two promises.

First, a democratization of the past is implied, a commitment to paying attention to social and cultural diversity, a sense of equality among actors whose lives are researched by the historian. Listening to all voices of all his-



torical actors suggests that we regard all of them as being of equal interest, that we do not reproduce the hierarchical structures of the past in our scholarly work. It also supports attempts to restore the imbalance that has resulted from centuries of inequality, oppression, and refusal to take members of some groups into account. One of the most famous uses of the metaphor of vocal practice in scholarship is a stark representation of that imbalance: Gayatri Spivak's question *can the subaltern speak?* makes the connection very clearly: social inequality plays out vocally in the ability to speak.² Second, the project also carries the promise that, despite sophisticated understandings of the limitations of our various sources, our methods and our own imaginations, we can somehow revive historical actors and their actions. Or, at the very least, we can re-present them, make them present and "alive" in our own mind and in our readers' minds. This connection between voice and presence has a long history in Western philosophy. It ranges from Socrates's oft-quoted dictum "Speak, so that I may see you" to Adriana Cavarero's reflections on the primacy of voice in Jacques Derrida's system of presence.³ In modern times, the equation between voice and presence has only become stronger with the rise of acoustic technology, even though that same technology has made the experience of disembodied voices much more common.⁴ Long before video-conferencing became ubiquitous, the telephone enabled us to seem present in places where in fact our bodies are absent. The phonograph and its many successors can re-present voices that have been emitted elsewhere, or even in the past. This was an unsettling experience for its early users.⁵ James Joyce captured the gramophone's spooky abilities of re-presentation in *Ulysses*:

Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice, yes: gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseeragain hellohello amarauf kopthsth. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face.⁶

It is perhaps the profound sense of loss evoked by describing "grandpa's voice" from beyond the grave that inspires all these metaphorical voices in history. Etched onto the phonogram is a voice that makes an absence almost tangible. The absence asserts itself in the way that the voice alone is present, a voice fruitlessly trying to overcome its own flightiness, making it seem impervious to any real historicization.⁷ As historians, we seem to be chasing after the voices of the past, but pay little attention to what is so acutely central to the voice, "Kraahraark!": its sound. As any user of a telephone knows, the sound of a voice can be highly individual: it makes the speaker seem present not only because their words travel from one place to another, but because we immediately recognize a speaker who is personally known to us. We easily take the voice as a symbol for the person on the other end, its sound evoking their body and identity. Or we think of our own voice as

representing us, despairing when a cold makes us sound like we are “not ourselves.”⁸ Moreover, voices are not culturally or politically innocent, and neither are they imagined to be. They lure sailors to rocks and early graves, they swing elections, they convince, repel, seduce, and command. The voice not only matters to us—especially those of us who are becoming like twenty-first-century cyborgs steeped in audio-visual media—it mattered to historical actors too. Indeed, it perhaps mattered more so in the past, because happenings that were purely verbal would rarely if ever be recorded live and thus were unrepeatable until the technology developed with which we have become familiar. Yet despite surges in interest in the history of the body, the senses, and experience, very little about voices’ more visceral qualities, or about the sensorial experience, can be found in historiography.

In what follows, I will attempt to chart out some ways in which we can attend to voices of the past. More particularly, I will focus on those sounds emitted in modern Europe, before acoustic recording and replay technology became available.⁹ I do so mainly because this is the context with which I am most familiar and from where I can draw my examples.¹⁰ Even though I hope some of the strategies proposed here may be useful to historians of earlier periods, they do depend on the kind of material generated by modern or modernized institutions, such as the Conservatoire, standardized parliamentary records, and systematic approaches to sound and language that were deemed scientific. First, I will reflect on some of the problems that historians have encountered when attempting to write histories including voice. Second, I will show some workarounds that have been successfully used by scholars in different disciplines to historicize singing, speaking, and listening bodies. And third, I will present some ways in which historians, drawing on methodologies from sound studies, musicology, and performance studies, can, in fact, include voice, or at least some voices, in their work.

The Problem of Missing Documentation

The main problem scholars have encountered in dealing with the voices of the past is a predictable one, but it needs to be pointed out. Because of its immaterial nature, vocal sound leaves no direct traces that can be stored, archived, and retrieved. A historian of eighteenth-century France, Arlette Farge, framed the problem with some sense of poetry in her *Essai pour une histoire des voix*, drawing attention to the voice’s propensity to evaporate almost as soon as it is produced. “The voice,” for Farge, is “a sonorous thread” drawing connections of “wind and breath” in mysterious but also deeply embodied ways.¹¹

What the *Essai* studies is not so much the sound of the French eighteenth-century voice, but rather that of eighteenth-century French. Sifting through different spellings and transcriptions of speech in the Parisian legal,

police, and welfare archives, Farge meticulously reconstructs changing patterns of pronunciation and its sociocultural meanings. This reveals much about the lives of those who have landed in the archives against their will. Institutional archives often reflect extorted speech: "People spoke of things that would have remained unsaid if a destabilizing social event had not occurred."¹² Farge restores the words of lower-class women especially, to the historical record, but not the sound of their voices. This is of particular importance because the political and cultural inability to hear women's voices has a history of its own, which goes beyond a sheer unwillingness to listen. As research on early recording technology has shown, the apparent inaudibility of the female voice was often explained in terms of pitch and timbre. Political inaudibility therefore became entrenched in the science and technology of acoustics and biology.¹³

It is telling that, although "through these small lives [we can] hear the inaudible, sometimes ignoble, sound of humanity, and catch the insistent melody of attempted happiness and hard-won dignity," Farge still struggled to uncover vocal sounds.¹⁴ They are lost to our practices of record-keeping: voices do not take a tangible form and therefore do not fit on our shelves. Jonathan Rée, who studied Deaf practices in *I See a Voice*, suggests an approach focusing on the different ways in which voices have been visualized.¹⁵ But no system, no matter how sophisticated, can really store sound, or allow us to archive it like we can images or text. As Rée puts it, recordings cannot reproduce voice, they merely supply incomplete and mediated copies of a vocal reality.¹⁶ In fact, once recordings do become possible and widely available, they will seem to have done more to co-create voices than to simply store them.¹⁷ The impossibility of storing a sensorial reality in an archive is quite common: the smells of Paris have evaporated too, as has the taste of absinth—as various historians of the senses have pointed out.¹⁸ Yet there seems to be something particularly light-footed about vocal sound. Mladen Dolar described it as "a bodily missile which has detached itself from its source, emancipated itself, yet remains corporeal."¹⁹ This mobile, precariously attached, quality of vocal sound has been central to images of the voice for centuries. Its propensity to hide and quietly disappear was embodied, in Ancient Greece, by the loquacious nymph Echo, whose punishment for her talkativeness was to wither away and merge with the forest, leaving her repetitive voice to wander on its own.²⁰

The cruel treatment of Echo, perhaps the ultimate loud woman, also points us to another document-related problem: not every voice was considered equally important and therefore not every utterance was noted or even heard as fully human.²¹ The writings of notable historians have often given praise to the silence of women, children, slaves, and other others, reflecting a general unwillingness to attend to their voices and class their utterances as speech.²² This has had the effect of, ostensibly at least, erasing their voices: while discourse (voice heard as speech) has been transcribed,

irrational or illegible sound (voice heard as inhuman) has at best been described. Those who did manage to raise their voices were often compared to animals, which underlined their vocality while depriving them of vocal agency. The image of the overtalkative woman, be it a nag, a gossip, or a frivolous girl, is splashed across the pages of newspaper columns, novels, and even medical treatises. It was, for example, assumed in the nineteenth century that women did not stutter, because their more flexible vocal organs were so eminently suited for, and trained in, ceaseless chatter.²³ In reading these documents, we are invited to imagine the nineteenth century as a cacophony of women, hawkers, children, sailors, so-called “savages,” and fools—but we are not to hear any of those sounds as voices capable of speech. They are merely noise.

Fruitlessly imagining such noisy scenes makes one wish for ways to recreate these soundscapes. Alain Corbin’s masterful imagination of the sonic materiality of bells in rural France is an example of this approach, as is Mark Smith’s study of the divided soundscape of Antebellum America.²⁴ Such histories go beyond descriptions of experience and represent the sonic potentiality of the material world from which a soundscape can emerge. Knowing how large and heavy a bell was can tell us much about its acoustic qualities, but it also leaves a lot of imaginative work for the reader. Moreover, as musicologists have been showing since the 1990s, reconstituting the material objects that produced certain historical sounds still leaves us grappling with our profoundly ahistorical ears, which are accustomed to making sense of our own, twenty-first-century environment.²⁵ The “period ear,” as musicologists have termed it, cannot be simply (re)constructed, it must be painstakingly imagined, pieced together from a variety of sources to modestly begin to understand what historical actors may have heard.²⁶

Studies of musical and theatrical “period ears” offer the first hints toward a solution, for historians, to the problem of the voice’s immateriality and transience. The issue is not only, or even mainly, a lack of sources *per se*, but rather a lack of methodological tools to mobilize archival material for a more sensory engagement with the sounding throats and ringing ears of the past. Recent work in sound studies has increasingly shown that dealing with the acoustic realities of our environment demands the development of “sonic skills.”²⁷ This was as true in the past as it is now, as studies on the “sonic skills” of car mechanics or of early experts in medical auscultation show quite clearly.²⁸ The majority of historical and cultural studies of sonic practices and sonic skills have been carried out on subjects related to sound-producing technologies (telephones, cars, air-raids, cassettes, etc.),²⁹ which leave historians with a “paper trail.”³⁰ I would argue, however, that for most of modernity the human voice was imagined to be a technology or a communication device as well. The methods used by historians of the MP3, or of the stethoscope and other avatars of acoustic techniques, can therefore be applied to a history of the voice.³¹

Currently Available Solutions

So far, however, the field of sound studies has been less concerned with the living voice—with the notable exception of the work of Nina Eidsheim, to which I will come back later. That is not to say that they, or historians, have been inattentive to the voices of the past. Various historians of representative politics, in particular, have recently pointed to the importance of speech in the making of modern life.³² More generally, the study of rhetoric and oratory seems to be making a comeback, albeit a modest one.³³ Studies of oratory and political practice do not necessarily focus their attention on voices per se—their main concerns are style and effect. When studying the latter, however, many of them show, first, how important the vocal practice of public speech remained in the nineteenth century,³⁴ which was supported by the rise of printing and the increasing availability of the press.³⁵ Second, they also demonstrate how affected modern audiences could be by particular modes of speech, which were modulated by the voices delivering them. Daniel Morat notes, for example, in his study of Otto von Bismarck's speeches, that the Chancellor had a particular relationship to the parliamentary stenographers on account of his apparently less than pleasant and audible voice.³⁶ His speeches were interstitched with "sudden rasping" and interjections in a "weak voice"; they "could absolutely not be represented by stenographers," because no "written symbols" existed to signify such sounds.³⁷

The sphere of the reception of political speech is also where the nineteenth-century archive excels: various reports, columns, diaries, and satirical pieces have been preserved, in both published and unpublished forms, about almost any public utterance, and particularly about political ones.³⁸ With such a literate and eloquent audience reporting on their own experience of the speeches they heard, it is no wonder that historians interested in the issue of the political spoken word have mainly turned to practices of listening rather than to practices of vocalization. This is also largely in line with the work done in fields like anthropology, philosophy, and musicology, where sophisticated methodologies and analyses of listening have been put forward calling for a radical inclusion of the body in understandings of sound, whether it is as "grain" or as "materialization."³⁹ Of particular value for attempts to historicize the voice is Freya Jarman's *Queer Voices*, which offers a sensitive engagement with ambiguous voices through an analysis of the author's practices of listening as well as through a musicological reflection on the bodily practices, cultural scripts, and processes of mediatization that go into making such voices.⁴⁰ Observing that "voice categories are naturalized rather than natural as such," Jarman calls "the naturalness of the voice itself" into question, particularly where it intersects with that other category that is "naturalized rather than natural as such": gender.⁴¹ "Less visible," Jarman notes, "the voice is nonetheless complicit in the theatrics of gender, and a voice that does not comply with the visible signs of gender is as disruptive to the performance of gender as any other, silent sign could be."⁴²

Jarman's account of the gendered and queer voice in popular music also points to a second approach to thinking about the voice culturally and historically, which is by focusing on its embodied qualities. Sitting on the boundary between body and language, the voice mediates between both: "The bodily nature of the voice and its opposition in this way renders the voice as a site of danger, a borderline object that draws attention to the mutability of boundaries"⁴³ and, I would add, to the mutability of the body itself. The voice does the cultural work of embodiment with remarkable agility and speed. As histories of song and recording have shown, vocal techniques that claim to be natural have long histories of artifice and change over time as theatrical taste and genres change. The jazz voice arose in conjunction with the rise of the microphone and changes in American musical taste.⁴⁴ Likewise, the disappearance of the castrato from the operatic stage shows how models of what was heard as natural or acceptable human sound have changed over time.⁴⁵ The voice seems to lend itself particularly to such performative histories of the body because, more than other physical characteristics, the changing nature of its seemingly biological character can be exposed quite easily. Performers can "put on" different voices and indeed change their bodies as well as gendered, sexual, and other markers in profound ways while still assuming a deep-seated connection between voice and embodied identity. Think, for example, about current popular counter-tenors and their sometimes exaggerated masculine trappings.⁴⁶

Although gender has received more attention so far, it is by no means the only way in which voices express, form, and anchor embodiment. Naomi André's *Black Opera* shows how ethnicity has, likewise, been vocalized and heard in profoundly visceral and material ways.⁴⁷ Likewise, Nina Eidsheim's writes, in *The Race of Sound*: "In the same way that culturally derived systems of pitches organized into scales render a given vibrational field *in tune* or *out of tune*, a culturally derived system of race renders a given vibrational field attached to a person as a *white voice*, a *black voice*—that is, 'in tune' with expected correlations between skin color and vocal timbre."⁴⁸ In her earlier work, Eidsheim established that engagement with sound is always thoroughly physical in ways that go far beyond hearing and listening.⁴⁹ Her analysis of the racialized voice draws our attention to the vocalizing body, but also to the constant interplay between producers and audiences of voice. If race is vocalized, after all, it can only do so when someone hears race "in" a voice's sound.⁵⁰

The deconstruction of the seemingly natural character of the embodied voice has, so far, mainly focused on the singing voice, or voices that are somehow trained or professional. Similarly, the ventriloquist's exceptional voice has been historicized, focusing on its tenuous relation to the vocalizing body. In *Dumbstruck*, Steven Connor draws our attention to the problem of the immaterial nature of the voice itself, but also immediately draws it back to its bodily origins. "The voice," Connor notes, is intimately connected to space and materiality because "it is the means of articulation. The voice is

the agent of the articulated body, for it traverses and connects the different parts of me, lungs, trachaea, larynx, palate, tongue, lips. It both distinguishes and connects ingestion and utterance. It moves from me to you, and from me to myself, in moving from the mouth to the ear.”⁵¹

The seemingly acousmatic quality of the ventriloquist’s voice sets it apart. Connor shows how it was feared, celebrated, and ridiculed throughout different moments in history, as the acousmatic voice was heard differently. The ventriloquized voice, however, also outlines those practices and norms that define what constituted vocal normality.⁵² Those are tightly linked to ideas of physically externalized propriety, beauty, and health—to the body deemed to be “normal.”

Work in different disciplines provides us with a number of approaches and strategies to deal with different aspects of the voices of the past. They show us ways to think about written documents as representatives of a language that also existed as a spoken one and that was therefore modulated by pronunciation and the categories of identity that those entailed—be they the dialectic utterances of a young Parisian prostitute or the lofty elocution of a parliamentary representative. They show that the print culture of the nineteenth century, rather than replace an earlier oral culture, actually provides us with the reflections of a multitude of listeners on the theatrical, political, musical, and other vocalizations that they heard. And they provide us with a hefty toolbox with which to think about the intertwined, embodied practices of singing and listening to musical voices, exposing the shifting sounds of gender, sexuality, and race. What is missing—or rather what is left for the sociocultural historian to discover—is, first, how to mobilize and adapt such methods. How do we thoroughly historicize the voice, or integrate it into our historical research? Second, how do we bring this knowledge to bear on the more mundane daily practices of voice, the constant talking, humming, murmuring, whispering, and mumbling that went on offstage in living rooms, debating clubs, business meetings, on the streets, and elsewhere?

Suggestions for a History of the Voice in Four Steps

In what follows, I will attempt to sketch out a strategy. Building on the existing work on embodied and heard voices mentioned above and combining those methods with tools from the fields of sound studies and performativity, I will chart out an approach in four steps. Rather than consecutive stages of research, these suggest four different but interlocking approaches, including practices of receiving, describing, producing, and making sense of vocal sounds, thus involving both speakers and their audiences in the process—sometimes blurring the boundaries between both. They will, however, be set out as four separate steps below for the sake of clarity: The first is looking at ways to interpret early attempts to record or document vocal sounds on paper; the second is looking at suggestions for a historical glossary

of descriptors of vocal sounds; the third is looking at the place of historical actors' bodies in histories of the voice; and the fourth is looking at the need to consider the constant interplay between listeners and speakers and between different sounding practices. Practically, these four approaches include ways to reinterpret a number of sources that will be familiar to historians of modernity as well as ways to include perhaps less well-known or less conventional source materials. They also insist on a combination of analytical approaches focusing on vocabulary, bodily practice, and the particularity of sound as a phenomenon.⁵³ Together, they aim to present a consistently historicizing approach, one that is deeply interested in sensorial experiences in the past while critically engaging with the sensory experience of the contemporary historian. In other words, the following strategy does not suggest a reconstruction of voices or ears of the past, but rather argues for attuning ourselves to the changing cultural, social, and political meaning afforded to voices by means of analyzing and contextualizing their experiential presence in historical sources. The goal is to do so while remaining critically aware of contemporary meanings attached to the experience of hearing and producing vocal sound.

Step 1: Recording

The first step proposed here addresses the commonly perceived problem of the absence of acoustic recordings until the late nineteenth century. While there is no way to retrieve and replay voices before that period, sound studies scholars such as John Picker and Jonathan Sterne have shown that the ambition to record sound far preceded the invention of the machinery that would eventually do so.⁵⁴ In other words, for most of the nineteenth century the acoustic replay of a sound was not practically available, but the ability to somehow store sound for the future, or hear those of the past, existed in the imagination. Nineteenth-century recording practices went beyond imagining, however. A wide range of techniques and technologies was invented to capture sound. Replay remained beyond the grasp of these inventors, but the act of recording was refined through the application of different systems of reception (of vibration, mainly) and notation. Contraptions like the eidophone (which translated sound vibrations into botanical-looking images), the imaginative use of *cinématographie* to capture speech and above all facial expression, and photographs of vocal vibrations sat next to various systems of transcription such as musical notation, shorthand ("the art of following speech in writing") and newer inventions such as Alexander Bell's "visible speech" alphabet.⁵⁵ Because these technologies were mostly visualizations of sound, they have left us with an impressive "paper trail."⁵⁶

Reading these differently notated recordings of nineteenth-century sound is not straightforward, and gaining fluency in the interpretations of visible alphabets, shorthands, or tonograms probably asks for too much of an investment of time and energy to be workable for all but the most spe-

cialized researchers. I would argue, however, that a more cultural approach to these sources, which does not demand such fluency, goes a long way in providing historians with basic understandings of the meaning and value of the sound that is conveyed in these documents. Simply put, the particular goals and characteristics of a notational system, usually explained at length by its inventor, shows what *aspects* of sound were considered important and

in *The Century Magazine* for May, 1891. They were obtained by singing into an instrument called the eidophone (Fig. 52). It is a simple tube bent upward at one end, over which a membrane of india



FIG. 53.—Seaweed or landscape form.

rubber is stretched. A film of water is poured over this, and on it is smoothed a layer of very light powder, which has been made into a paste. The notes

Figure 1. Image produced by the eidophone. Courtesy of Cornell University Library.⁵⁸

meaningful. Whereas musical notation, for example, drew attention mainly to rhythm and pitch, the eidophone attempted to capture aspects of timbre, as its resulting flowers were thought to reflect the purity and harmoniousness of the singer's produced tones.⁵⁷ This insight in the weighing of differently valued qualities or characteristics of sound are particularly useful for a study of the history of vocal sound because they can help us to reinterpret a notational system that historians are already very familiar with: text.

Alphabetic languages, even though we may often forget it in daily usage, are a particularly longstanding example of how vocal sounds of the past can be recorded, but they are also an example of how closely description and prescription are aligned and how entangled they are in the case of the voice. A written text can be read out loud, an extemporaneous speech can be taken down in notes, and poems are recited while they sit on the page. Take the British tradition of the monarch's speech to open parliament, for example, which consisted, in the 1830s and 1840s, of a young queen vocalizing a text composed by her government. This vocal performance was followed by numerous attempts to transcribe, transport, and even revoice the speech—a sign that the speech consisted of vocal performance and composition, both equally important, and that the chronological order between voice and text was thoroughly unclear.⁵⁹ In *The Ancient Phonograph*, Shane Butler shows how text can have even more sounding and sound-recording qualities, in approaching ancient textual material as “vocal artifacts.”⁶⁰

Recognizing these sounding qualities of written text allows us to return to many classic, conventional sources for modern history and mine them for their potential as recordings of voices: not only political speeches, but also poems, sermons, military commands, and even novels, which were often expected to be read out loud.⁶¹ Taking into account the ambitions expressed in the invention of various new notations systems as well as the sonic skills embedded in these systems allows us to focus on those aspects of sound that we know to have been important. Many examples could be drawn from the proceedings of various European Houses of Parliament, representing speeches and debates in a space in which voices, quite clearly, mattered. Although these texts do not represent literal representations of speeches, but rather heavily redacted ones, they do represent a systematic attempt to record the voices as well as the opinions of a large number of people over a long period of time.⁶² They also show the wide range of skills that clerks, listeners, and speakers shared in making sense of vocal sound. They referred to voices' pitches and registers in a musical vocabulary (deriding *falsestto* and *tremolo* sounds, for example), and drew on memories of different men's voices (pointing out the ways in which some younger MPs sounded like their fathers). Some even used bird sounds and different musical genres as evocative images of human sound. When, in the early twentieth century Belgian second chamber, the liberal Louis Hymans and Catholic Charles Woeste locked horns over public education, they did so by mocking each other's speeches musically. The dragging discussion, one member had earlier

suggested, was just repeating “*de vieux rossignols*”—old news, in other words, but the phrase could also be taken to literally mean “old nightingales.” The Catholics picked up this image of their opponents as a choir of old nightingales, singing the same old song. Hymans responded in kind, suggesting that the Catholic Woeste was singing hymns and that his words, too, were repetitive and not representative of rational speech:

Mr. Woeste: They sing flat! (More laughter)

Mr. Hymans: Undoubtedly, you alone sing in tune in your chapel, but I am of another musical school!⁶³

Step 2: Descriptive Glossary

What has become obvious from these examples of political speech, I hope, is that listeners in a period before acoustic recording were extremely skilled at describing vocal sounds, and they did so with great care, attention to detail, and imagination.⁶⁴ They likely shared these sonic skills with their reading audience, who would have been adept at reading texts as renditions (however faulty, incomplete, or distorted) of vocal sound. As Katherine Bergeron has shown in her study of *mélodie*, the interaction between changing ideas about voice, changing vocal practices, and changing representations of voice was constant. Moreover, in French, as in many other languages, it was also entangled with changing understandings of language and *parler juste*.⁶⁵ Moreover, professionals of voice and vocal knowledge were not exclusively interested in beautiful and pathological voices: the sound of the common Parisian plumber sits next to that of Sarah Bernhardt in the *Archives de la Parole*, which not only shows an interest in the diversity of voices, but also that a number of professional and leisurely activities were understood as dependent on particular kinds and skills of speech. Whereas historians have lately pointed to the importance of the vocal practices of known public speakers (such as political representatives, judges, and preachers), this importance of vocal interactions in less exalted professions has not received equal attention. But it was recognized in the past: stammering manuals, for example, regularly explained how important fluent speech was for one’s income. On the very first page of William Ketley’s introduction to the Beasley Method, a therapeutic approach to stammering, readers were confronted with this stark image:

To the inveterate stammerer almost as many avenues of life are closed as to the deaf and dumb. The army, the navy, the civil service, public appointments and public office of every kind, parliament, the pulpit, the bar and the scholastic professions are, sealed against them; . . . Even in the humbler walks of life the stammerer is debarred from many callings. He can neither be railway porter, nor guard, nor engine driver, nor policeman, nor soldier, nor jack-tar. His unreadiness of speech haunts him even as a carter or

checker, and only in the most humble callings where silence is golden, and physical work alone is required, can he be said to feel least the restraint of his affliction.⁶⁶

Following Bergeron's approach in connecting musical and medical skills with more day-to-day sonic skills, we may fruitfully use musical, medical, and therapeutic sources like the above to look for clues about the kind of vocabulary that historical observers would have had at their disposal to describe vocal sounds. In nineteenth-century France, this included a number of comparisons likening the human voice to musical instruments, in order to understand it better. Early-nineteenth-century medical treatises on the voice would often also include a chapter on the physics of sound, which seems to have led authors to this imagery of musical instruments to explain the mechanics of the voice. Eduard Fournie, for example, who wrote an extensive study on the physiology of the voice, insisted that "the larynx functions with the same mechanism as a wind instrument," an idea that he expanded upon in the book's lengthy "preliminary notions" and that contained significant anatomical and acoustic knowledge.⁶⁷ While opinions differed on whether the mechanics of the voice were more like those of a violin, a trombone, or a clarinet, running through all these reflections are notions of acoustic similarity. Musical instruments were believed to have been developed in order to imitate the human voice, which represented an ideal as "the sound that goes most directly to the human soul."⁶⁸

In less scientific parlance, in journalism and satire, for example, this imagination of the voice as instrument was turned into a rich vocabulary to describe particular voices, that is, to designate the grandiose vocal sounds of a particular speaker as "our great trombone,"⁶⁹ to ascribe aspects of the sound of a violin to a particularly weepy voice, or even to imagine a multivoiced debate as an orchestral performance. A report of a student debate at the Cambridge Union at the end of the nineteenth century noted that "it began pianissimo, then led through a crescendo, to fff. Then came a diminuendo and a pretty little staccato passage from Mr. Malim, that was a relief after a long spell of Maestoso."⁷⁰

Such descriptions of voices resurface in all kinds of personal and published writing in the nineteenth century but are often difficult to grasp in isolation. Many historians of both politics and childhood, for example, will have come across "silvery" voices, which clearly denotes a certain skill and vocal success, but its precise meaning usually remains unclear. In conjunction with the knowledge of the voice's mechanics, however, and in conversation with a body of work in which such descriptions were repeatedly used, they start to make more sense. The examination books of the Paris Conservatoire are one such source. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, teachers of music and declamation jotted down brief notes about their students, usually reducing a performance to one terse phrase such as "clear, sonorous and pleasant voice," "charming, but in need of much work," or the

devastating “will make a good chorister.”⁷¹ They resorted, quite naturally, to the kind of metaphoric vocabulary described above. Though consummate professionals, these teachers cannot be considered scientific or medical experts: they were unlikely to have more than a passing familiarity with the scientific publications cited above. The Conservatoire generally insisted on a separation between science and art, and claimed superior expertise in the latter based in tradition. Various enterprising scientists attempted to offer courses in vocal hygiene or physiology, but none of them really took hold in the curriculum. In 1911, the director declared that “teaching in the conservatory must be and remain purely artistic.”⁷² The conservatory’s teachers’ notes therefore reflect a general, if extremely well-developed, way to speak about the voice, and their ability to describe vocal sounds can perhaps best be compared to the skillset of theater and music critics. Interestingly, rather than referring to color to describe *timbre* or *Klangfarbe*,⁷³ their notes use a rich vocabulary of temperatures (warm vs. cold voices), metals (brassy and silvery), bodily forms (roundness vs. angularity), and social associations (singing like a cook, *comme une cuisinière*). In 1873, Charles Blanc, Director of Fine Arts and friend of composer Hector Berlioz, made a list of the following notes as he was assessing the declamation exams:⁷⁴

Remarkable, a bit affected
 Audible, good organ, bite
 Good voice and warmth of expression
 A bit cold without physiognomy
 Physiognomy without any charm but not without character
 Disagreeable physique, intelligent, polite
 Has grace, taste, weak voice that tires easily
 Wisdom, gravity, beauty . . . a nuance of coldness, too much emotion
 Pretty voice well managed, a bit cold
 No organ, dull and muffled voice. Nothing to be done?

Whereas the avalanche of medical, musical, and therapeutic manuals of vocal health may seem to be far removed from the reality of a common speaker or listener, these more mundane, rapid-fire notes show, first, that one did not need to be a scientist or a poet to have access to a rich vocabulary about voice and, second, that the terminology used across different genres was not too widely different.⁷⁵ This becomes even more obvious when we take the kind of vocabulary used by satirists and journalists into account, who—very much like the professors of chant and elocution—commented on speakers’ *grasseyement*,⁷⁶ on the metal in their voice, or compared some speaking voices to musical instruments. One particularly well-known example, Henry Lucy, who was known as both a political journalist and a parliamentary sketch writer in Victorian Britain, provides numerous examples of the creative ways in which journalists managed to evoke politicians’ sounding voices. In his *Men and Manner in Parliament*, we come across a speaker with a voice “the like of which has but rarely rung through the rafters of

St. Stephens” and that sounded “like a peal of bells, for a single one could not produce such varied tones.” Another was dismissed in biblical fashion, as his “voice in debate is even as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal,” and yet another had “a voice the peculiarities of which an adequate impression could be given only by the introduction here of a musical stave fantastically scored.” Lucy described many other voices as well, more succinctly but effectively.⁷⁷ These pithy statements, like the examination notes above, form an imperfect glossary. Meaning can only be derived indirectly by observing where, how, and for what reasons singers or speakers were repeatedly characterized by attributing certain terms or phrases. But they are a place to start understanding the surprisingly specialized vocabulary of voice that was employed in a context without acoustic recording but with well-developed sonic skills. They also show how valuable an exploration of sources outside the precise remit of a singular speech, event, or performance can be in order to contextualize historical vocal practices.

Step 3: The Body

As the Paris Conservatoire’s exams show as well, much like certain voices were considered to be suitable for certain roles, they were also thought to fit particular bodies. The two are connected, of course: on stage, a perfect representation of the hero, the shrew, or the fool was shown as well as vocalized. In nineteenth-century understandings of vocal practices and vocal training, bodies mattered and were imagined as matter. Rising attention to the vocal organs, and the larynx in particular, produced increasingly integrated and performative understandings of the role of the biological body in vocal production throughout the century.⁷⁸ It also increasingly anchored the voice in the throat—a process that sought to lessen the eeriness of the research subject and culminated in the use of photographs of the singing or speaking larynx as a visual stand-in for vocal sound. By the end of the nineteenth century, the voice was, for some researchers, synonymous with laryngeal movement. In some cases, this material understanding of vocal practice even carried over to the voice itself, which was understood as a physical phenomenon produced by a material body and as a something to be emitted or ingested as well, with commentators describing long speeches as heavy meals, or regional pronunciation as a garbled *bouillabaisse*.⁷⁹ A commentator on Cambridge’s student debates, for example, implored speakers in 1895 to “adapt themselves to the meteorological conditions. Beefsteak is excellent in winter, also plum pudding, but in summer one’s soul delights in . . . thirst-assuaging lettuce.”⁸⁰

The nineteenth-century apparent discovery of the materiality of the voice, and its subsequent insistence on the bodily origins and the nature of its sound, should urge us to pay particular attention to the speaking and singing body when historicizing the spoken word.⁸¹ The history of voice is not just a history of the senses: it is not only the ears of the listener involved

in the processes of meaning-making that created these culturally specific sounds. Next to the “period ear,” what could be called a “period larynx” was at work. Unlike historical musical instruments, this cannot be built—although singers do engage in historical vocal exercises to replicate the sounds of baroque performers, for example. It therefore has to be imagined using historical understandings of how the body took shape, how it moved, and how it mattered in the historical period at hand. For the nineteenth century, that means attending to the scientific discoveries and inventions hinted at before. It should also include a reading of these discoveries in the light of cultural understandings of the embodied identity that guided them.

Despite the growing influence of evolutionary theories, much of the expertise produced on voices was still based on an understanding of the human body as a product of its physical environment. And thus, Italians were believed to be naturally good singers, while “Laplanders” would have been discouraged from developing a pleasant speaking voice by the cold. Or, as minister, amateur singer, and self-declared expert Theodor Schmauk put it: “In cold climates we may look for notes of storm, and ruggedness and battle and conquest. In temperate climes, there should be life and grace. The Frenchman’s tones should be short, piquant, airy and gay. The German’s, broad, slow, reverential. The Italian’s, voluptuous and melodic. The Englishman’s, positive, stubborn, formal.”⁸²

Such characterizations were not debunked as stereotypes in the brave new world of experimental science, but they gained new currency as the in-

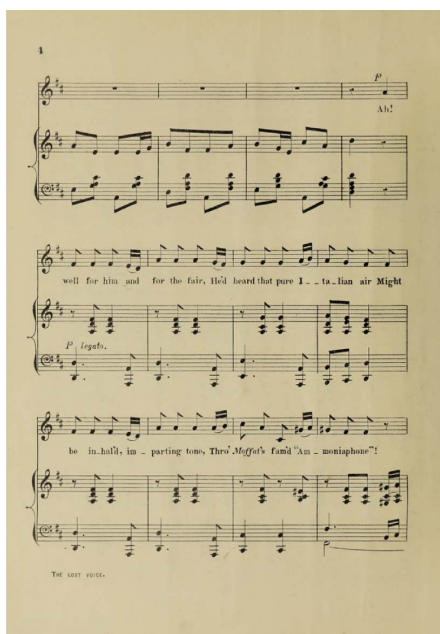
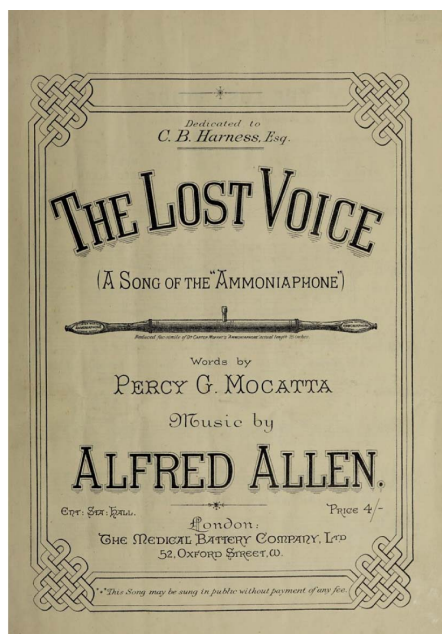


Figure 2. Advertising for the ammoniaphone. Courtesy of the Wellcome Collection, London.⁸³

creasing stress on comparative biology was brought to bear on such matters. So-called “natural explanations” emerged for various vocal characteristics. The *Ammoniaphone* advertised by a certain Mr. Mocca, for example, claimed that the high quantities of ammonia in the air in Italian cities accounted for the country’s excellent vocalists. Breathing in “Italian air” would therefore help aspiring English singers to achieve their operatic dreams. Old understandings of vocalized identity were thus integrated into modern understandings, leading to the development of practical exercises or even curative instruments for singers and speakers in search of the perfect, natural voice. It is also in this context that the practices of the ethnicized, gendered, or aged voice can be better understood—or, that the processes of “naturalization” (Jarman) or “ossification” (Eidsheim) of the voice into a particular gendered, ethnicized, or aged guise take place.

Step 4: Interconnected Sonic Skills

Although the history of the modern voice is closely aligned with the history of the body—and can therefore take methodological cues from that field—there are some specificities to take into account. As historians of the body and particularly those with an interest in health and medicine have shown, nineteenth-century bodies were often understood as outer, material reflections of one’s inner moral life.⁸⁴ This carried over to the voice, as a number of unconventional voices were heard as markers of their owner’s immorality or abnormality as well—overly high-pitched male voices would, for example, be classed as “eunuchoid.” French physiologist Eduard Fournie made a point of describing the soprano voice of a young man whose voice “resembles that of a eunuch” even though “the man who possesses it has fathered two children and can, moreover, provide all other possible testimony.”⁸⁵ Traveling from inside one’s body to another’s ear, however, the voice occupied a liminal space. On the one hand, it seemed to reveal inner thoughts and emotions—giving things away that discourse and faces otherwise kept secret—but on the other hand, the voice could manipulate and fool others as well. Rather than belonging to the speaker and singer in a straightforward manner, the voice always already appeared to be intersubjective, meaning that more than one body is always at play when studying the historical voice. The voice’s capacity to travel had been understood in such a semi-material way by, among others, Francis Bacon as well.⁸⁶ And although the idea of sound waves and sound’s travel through the ether would come to replace such knowledge, the voice never became exclusively or completely tethered to its bodily place of origin.

Put more simply, the history of the voice should always concern both larynges and ears, and above all the movements in and between them. This entails, I would argue, not only a performative approach but also one focused on performance and practice in a more literal sense. It is through constant practice and its repetition that voices have accounted for historical

change. Much like sonic skills include conscious exercise and work in developing the act of listening (next to the unconscious work of existing and functioning in a changing sonic environment), they should also include the conscious practice or training that go into learning how to speak, how to sing, and how to sound right for a particular environment.⁸⁷ This practice is always performed in connection to shared understandings of health, beauty, and comprehensibility. While historical actors of any given period or context may not vocally perform in similar ways, they did share vocabularies, imaginations of the body, and ears attuned to the same aspects of transcribable sound described above. Vocal performances were never carried out in isolation or as a collective endeavor, but in constant conversation with other performances and with these shared expectations.

At the same time, the pace of corporeal change expressed in and through voice was uneven and was practiced and experienced within those conversations. Despite their recurrent insistence on normality, biological laws, and the universal, nineteenth-century observers also showed great interest in the inherent unruliness of the voice, which seemed to have the capacity to run away with otherwise stable bodies. It was noted, for example, that the voice of young men was specifically unruly “at that interesting period of life, when we experience for the first time this thirst for love” and “nature develops in so rapid a manner the vocal organs” that they become untrustworthy.⁸⁸ This was a remarkable fact, since women’s bodies were generally believed to be far less stable and provided less control, as the female larynx was thought to be less developed than the male one. Moreover, some voices ran away with others’ bodies, exerting such power over their listeners’ ears that normal control over their actions was threatened. Practices of hypnosis were generally limited to small circles, but the image of mesmerism and the threat it could pose in the hands of a skillful orator was much more widespread.⁸⁹ Debating societies advertised their effectiveness, for example, by claiming that those who wished to “sway the Senate or mesmerise a congregation from the pulpit” could do so with a little practice.⁹⁰ The effect of the speaker’s voice was therefore understood as potentially quite different from the effect of their message. The intersubjective interplay at work during conversation was, in other words, not only a question of information or discourse being exchanged between speakers and listeners who sent and received messages through language, it was a matter of both parties performing cultural work to engage with the sounds being produced and the expectations, social values, and meanings attached to them in their own right.

Conclusion

One could argue that, despite the absence of acoustic technology for replay, there are in fact recordings available of voices of the nineteenth century. These can be read and understood in ways that may differ from the methods

we use to approach acoustic material, but the results of those methods are not as different as one might assume. As musicologist Nicolas Cook explains: “Just as performances are not adequately understood as reproductions of work, so recordings are not adequately understood as reproductions of performances; rather, they represent performances through complex processes of cultural signification. We hear recordings as performances, in other words diegetically, even when we know that the performance represented by the recording never took place.”⁹¹

Familiarity with the historical vocabulary used to describe vocal sounds allows for such a diegetical approach to written records as well. What is recorded in these documents is a combination of material aspects of vocal sound, some of them pertaining to the physics of sound, but most to the corporeality of the practices of vocalization and listening. In trying to piece together the “complex processes of cultural signification,” which were put into play to represent sounds and create the documents we now have at our disposal, we must therefore attend to cultural practices far beyond that of the recording itself. This entails the inclusion of sources that are not directly related to a particular speech, song, body, or event we may be interested in.

That being said, an inclusion of voice in modern histories will depend first and foremost on a willingness and methodology to reinterpret a number of known texts as representations of vocal practice. The fact that political opinions in parliaments were spoken and heard, the notion that business could be conducted on a man’s word, the idea that children’s silvery voices could pierce a sensitive person’s heart, knowing that “votes for women” was a cry and not only a placard, the repeated experience of letting the sounds of a sermon wash over you in church—all of these things mattered to listeners and speakers. And they should therefore also matter to us. Moreover, recognizing that the sociocultural and political effect of a discourse would depend largely on the way it was delivered and heard may help us understand the reception of a number of opinions voiced in the nineteenth century in new ways and encourage us to include utterances that have been documented as inarticulate among the voices, rather than the noise, of history. Attending to the histories of the voice is not a matter of giving voice to previously hidden figures in the historical record, relying on the ambiguous metaphor of voice as presence, which too often equates speaking out loud with authoritative or transgressive acts. Instead, delving into historical vocal practices allows for a more fine-grained analysis of the complexities and practicalities of both empowerment and oppression, and their often thoroughly mundane sounds.

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sound, music, and silence, for example, “Sound and Modernity” (IJHCS, 2019, with Kaarina Kilpiö) and “Educational Soundscapes” (Pedagogica Historica, 2017, with Pieter Verstraete). She blogs about her research at singinginthearchives.wordpress.com. Email: josephine.hoegaerts@helsinki.fi

Notes

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1. Magda Fahrni, “Who Now Reads E. P. Thompson? Or, (Re)reading The Making at UQAM,” *Labour/Le Travail* 72 (2013): 241–246.
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrismann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 66–111.
3. Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 216–217.
4. Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen, Acousmatic Sound in Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 180–222.
5. John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110–142.
6. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Paris: Shakespeare & Co., 1922), 109.
7. It also gives the impression of being a free-floating object untethered to culture—an impression that might be strengthened by the fact that a lot of research on vocal sounds and their recording has focused on Europe and the United States. But the uneasy relation between voices, cultural norms, bodies, and machines is at play elsewhere too, as shown, for example, by Kerim Yasar, *Electrified Voices: How the Telephone, Phonograph and Radio Shaped Modern Japan, 1868–1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Nicholas Harckness, *Songs of Seoul: An Ethnography of Voice and Voicing in Christian South Korea* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2013).
8. The issue has been taken up by numerous authors, most famously perhaps by Jacques Derrida. See Sarah Jackson, “Derrida on the Line,” *Derrida Today* 10, no. 2 (2017), doi:10.3366/drt.2017.0153.
9. The use of early sound recordings comes with its own methodological challenges. See Malte Kob and Thobias Weege, “How to Interpret Early Recordings? Artefacts and Resonances in Recording and Reproduction of Singing Voices,” in *Computational Phonogram Archiving*, ed. Rolf Bader (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2019), 335–350; and Karin Martensen, *The Phonograph Is Not an Opera House: Quellen und Analysen zu Ästhetik und Geschichte der frühen Tonaufnahme am Beispiel von Edison und Victor* [Sources and analyses on the aesthetics and history of early recordings, using Edison and Victor as examples] (Detmold, Germany: Allitera Verlag, 2019).
10. The sources I will be referring to are mostly scientific, educational, and political. My database (compiled over the course of two research projects) contains around

- 600 scientific and educational publications on the voice in Britain, France, and Germany, which are now held at the Wellcome Library, the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal College of Music, the *Bibliothèque National*, the *Samuel Heinicke Bibliothek*, and the library of the *Hochschule für Musik Felix Mendelssohn*, Leipzig, and reports on parliamentary speech in Westminster, Paris, and Brussels, which are largely accessible through Gallica, Historical Hansard, Plenum, and Gale's *Nineteenth Century UK Periodicals*.
11. Arlette Farge, *Essai pour une histoire des voix au dix-huitième siècle* [Essay on the history of the voice in the eighteenth century] (Paris: Seuil, 2009), 9.
 12. Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* [The allure of the archives] (Paris: Seuil, 1989). An English translation was published as *The Allure of the Archives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013).
 13. See Karin Martensen, "Mit Frauen(stimmen) kann man keine guten Tonaufnahmen machen: Zur Analyse eines Motivs aus der Geschichte der Aufnahmetechnik" [On cannot make good recordings with women's voices: Analysis of a motif in the history of recording], in *Das Geschlecht musikalischer Dinge* [The gender of musical things], ed. Rebecca Grotjahn, Sarah Schauburger, Johanna Imm, and Nina Jaeschke (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2018), 121–132; and Dmitri Zakharine, "Voice—E-Voice Design—E-Voice Community: Early Public Debates about the Emotional Quality of Radio and TV Announcers' Voices in Germany, the Soviet Union and the USA (1920–1940)," in *Electrified Voices: Media, Socio-Historical and Cultural Aspects of Voice Transfer*, ed. Dmitri Zakharine and Nils Meise (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 201–232.
 14. Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, 46.
 15. Jonathan Rée, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language and the Senses—A Philosophical History* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000).
 16. Rée, *I See a Voice*, 23.
 17. Martensen, *The Phonograph Is Not an Opera House*, 9.
 18. See, for example, Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Viktoria von Hoffmann, *From Gluttony to Enlightenment: The World of Taste in Early Modern Europe* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
 19. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 73.
 20. Josephine Hoegaerts, "'As It Echoes South and North': Girls and Boys Singing Identity into the National Landscape," in *Music, Longing and Belonging: Articulations of the Self and the Other in the Musical Realm*, ed. Magdalena Waligórska (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2014), 202–221.
 21. Joanna Bourke, *What It Means to Be Human: Reflections from 1791 to the Present* (London: Virago Press, 2011), 18–66.
 22. See Christina Luckyj, *'A Moving Reticke': Gender and Silence in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); John Heath, *The Talking Greeks: Speech, Animals and the Other in Homer, Aeschylus and Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
 23. Josephine Hoegaerts, "S-s-s-syncope: Music, Modernity, and the Performance of Stammering (ca. 1860–1930)," *Societies* 5 (2015): 744–759, doi:10.3390/soc5040744.
 24. Alain Corbin, *Village Bells: The Culture of the Senses in the Nineteenth-Century French Countryside* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,

- 2001). Moreover, recent developments in the use of (digital) technology in history has, for example, led to projects recovering the sounds of the British House of Commons by analyzing its spatial and architectural characteristics through acoustic techniques. See Catriona Cooper, "The Sound of Debate in Georgian England: Auralising the House of Commons," *Parliamentary History* 38, no. 1 (2019): 60–73, doi:10.1111/1750-0206.12413.
25. Shai Burstyn, "In Quest of the Period Ear," *Early Music* 25, no. 4 (1997): 692–701, doi:10.1093/earlyj/XXV.4.692.
 26. Gina Bloom, *Voice in Motion: Staging Gender, Shaping Sound in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).
 27. Karin Bijsterveld, *Sonic Skills: Listening for Knowledge in Science, Medicine and Engineering (1920s–Present)* (New York: Palgrave, 2019); Veit Erlmann, ed., *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).
 28. Stefan Krebs, "'Dial Gauge versus Senses 1—0': German Auto Mechanics and the Introduction of New Diagnostic Equipment, 1950–1980," *Technology and Culture* 55, no. 2 (2014): 354–389, doi:10.1353/tech.2014.0034; Melissa Van Drie, "Training the Auscultative Ear: Medical Textbooks and Teaching Tapes (1950–2010)," *The Senses and Society* 8, no. 2 (2013): 168–199, doi:10.2752/174589313X13589681981019.
 29. See Kaarina Kilpiö, "On the Remembered Relationship between Listeners and C-cassette Technology," in *Memory, Space, Sound*, ed. Johannes Brusila, Bruce Johnson, and John Richardson (Bristol: Intellect Ltd., 2016), 69–83; Carolyn Birdsall, *Nazi Soundscapes: Sound, Technology and Urban Space in Germany, 1933–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).
 30. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.
 31. Jonathan Sterne, *MP3, the Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Alexandra Supper, *Lobbying for the Ear: The Public Fascination with and Academic Legitimacy of the Sonification of Scientific Data* (Maastricht: Maastricht University Press, 2012).
 32. See Chris Reid, *Imprison'd Wranglers: The Rhetorical Culture of the House of Commons 1760–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Henk te Velde, *Sprekende politiek: Redenaars en hun publiek in de gouden eeuw* [Eloquent politics: Orators and their audience in the Golden Age] (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2015); and Daniel Morat, "Parlamentarisches Sprechen und Politisches Hör-Wissen im Deutschen Kaiserreich" [Parliamentary speech and political audio-knowledge in the German Empire], in *Wissensgeschichte des Hörens in der Moderne* [Intellectual history of hearing in the modern era], ed. Netzwerk Hörwissen im Wandel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 303–328.
 33. See Taru Haapala, *Political Rhetoric in the Oxford and Cambridge Unions, 1830–1870* (New York: Palgrave, 2016); Jouni Tilli, *The Continuation War 1941–1944 as a Metanoic Moment: A Burkean Reading of Finnish Clerical Rhetoric* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013); Jean Garrigues, *Les Grands discours parlementaires de Mirabeau à nos jours* [Great parliamentary speeches from Mirabeau to the present] (Paris: Armand Colin, 2017); Alan Finlayson, "Proving, Pleasing and Persuading? Rhetoric in Contemporary British Politics," *Political Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2014): 428–436, doi:10.1111/1467-923X.12122.
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35. Ivan Kreilkamp, *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
36. Morat, "Parliamentarisches Sprechen," 323.
37. A. S. Schmidt, *Neue Bismarck-Anekdoten: Interessante Aufzeichnungen aus dem Leben unseres Reichskanzlers, Leipzig 1888* [New Bismarck anecdotes: Interesting sketches from the life of our chancellor] (Leipzig, 1888), cited in Morat, "Parliamentarisches Sprechen."
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40. Freya Jarman, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave, 2011).
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42. *Ibid.*, 20.
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44. James Stark, *Bel Canto: A History of Vocal Pedagogy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Catherine Bergeron, *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Époque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Greg Goodale, *Sonic Persuasion: Reading Sound in the Recorded Age* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2011).
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48. Nina Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 4.
49. Nina Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
50. As demonstrated, also, in Jennifer Stoeve, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).
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52. Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 14.

53. This is not to say that I would argue for any exceptionalism: histories of the senses and the body can be mobilized in different ways to deal with different aspects of the experience and meaning of vocal sound. I would, however, argue that the human voice has held an exalted place among other sounds throughout large parts of history, and its privileged position therefore needs to be examined.
54. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes*; Sterne, *The Audible Past*.
55. See R. M. Marage, *Petit manuel de physiologie de la voix* [Small manual of vocal physiology] (Paris: Chez l'auteur, 1911); A. G. Bell, *Visible Speech: The Science of Universal Alphabets* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1867); and Hyppolite Prévost, *Nouveau manuel de sténographie, ou Art de suivre la parole en écrivant* [New manual for stenography, or the art of following speech in writing] (Paris: La librairie encyclopédie de Roret, 1843).
56. See Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
57. Henry Holbrook-Curtis, *Voice-Building and Tone-Placing: Showing a New Method of Relieving Injured Vocal Cords by Tone Exercises* (New York: D. Appleton, 1909), 201–202.
58. Holbrook-Curtis, *Voice-Building*, 201.
59. Josephine Hoegaerts, “The Sound of Sovereignty,” in *The Gender of Sovereignty*, ed. Anke Gilleir and Aude Defurne (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), 135–156.
60. Shane Butler, *The Ancient Phonograph* (Cambridge, MA: Zone Books, 2015), 56.
61. See Janice Schroeder, “Village Voices: Sonic Fidelity and the Acousmatic in *Adam Bede*,” *Victorian Review* 37, no. 1 (2011): 181–198, doi:10.1353/vcr.2011.0021; Catherine Robson, *Heart Beats: Everyday Life and the Memorized Poem* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).
62. John M. Robson, *What Did He Say? Editing Nineteenth-Century Speeches from Hansard and the Newspapers* (Lethbridge, AB: University of Lethbridge, 1988); Marnix Beyen, “De Parlementaire Handelingen en andere bronnen voor de studie van de taal van de negentiende-eeuwse politicus” [Parliamentary proceedings and other sources for the study of the language of the nineteenth-century politician], *Verslagen en mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse taal- en letterkunde*, 114 (2004): 11–18.
63. *Proceedings of the Chamber of Representatives* (Kamer van Volksvertegenwoordigers), 9 December 1903, 223.
64. As studies on Victorian literature have shown, authors like Charles Dickens and T. S. Eliot were particularly adept at this. Kreilkamp, *Victorian Storyteller*; Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes*; Schroeder, “Village Voices.”
65. Bergeron, *Voice Lessons*.
66. William J. Ketley, *Stammering: The Beasley Treatment* (Birmingham, UK: Hudson, 1900).
67. Eduard Fournie, *Physiologie de la voix et de la parole* (Paris: Hennuyer et fils, 1866), 377.
68. Colombat de L'Isère, *A Treatise upon the Diseases and Hygiene of the Organs of the Voice*, (Boston: Redding & Company, 1857), 15.
69. *The Granta*, 21 October 1893, 22.
70. *The Granta*, 1 June 1895, 360.
71. Documents held at the Archives Nationales (AN) at Pierrefitte, AJ/37/84, 192, 196, 204, 205, 216–220.

72. AN Pierrefitte, *AJ*/37/84 a5.
73. *Timbre* is notoriously difficult to define ("sound quality," "tone," "color," etc. are arguably equally unclear). For a discussion of vocal timbre and its cultural construction and meaning, see Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 4.
74. AN Pierrefitte, *AJ*/37/216, 1.
75. It did of course differ across regions, nations, languages, etc. Although even there it must be pointed out that the ideals attached to a healthy (and therefore beautiful or socially proper) voice traveled transnationally. For example, in scientific and educational treatises read and translated across borders, the ideals could be shared across Europe in adapted incarnations. (The "false" sound of the *false* *setto*, for example, was generally ascribed to cultural others in different places, even if the other in question took a different form).
76. A guttural pronunciation of the R considered to be a speech impediment at the time.
77. Henry Lucy, *Men and Manner in Parliament* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1874), 35, 80, 142.
78. The voice's anatomy had been documented before. Nineteenth-century experts shifted their attention beyond the voice box to the actual action of the vocal organs, which would become visible with the invention of the laryngoscope around 1860.
79. Auguste Lireux, *Assemblée nationale comique* [The humorous parliament] (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1850), 8, describing the southern accent of Démosthène Ollivier.
80. *The Granta*, 20 April 1895, 264.
81. That is, in addition to the attention to the materiality of sound that has been increasingly at the center of studies focusing on the spatial aspects of performances of speech, such as Cooper, "The Sound of Debate"; and Reid, *Imprison'd Wrangler*.
82. Theodore Schmauk, *The Voice in Speech and Song: A View of the Human Voice for Speakers and Singers and All Who Love the Arts of Speech and Song* (New York: John B. Alden, 1890).
83. Percy Mocatta and Walter Benjamin, *The Lost Voice: A Song of the Ammoniaphone* (London: The Medical Battery Company, 1885).
84. See, for example, Pasi Falk, "Corporeality and Its Fates in History," *Acta Sociologica* 28, no. 2 (1985): 115–136, doi:10.1177/000169938502800204.
85. Fournie, *Physiologie de la voix*, 577.
86. Bloom, *Voice in Motion*, 178–179.
87. On the conscious schooling and training of voices beyond the stage, see Janice Schroeder, "The Schooled Voice: Sound and Sense in the Victorian Schoolroom," *ZAA* 63, no. 1 (2015), doi:10.1515/zaa-2015-0003.
88. Marc Colombat de l'Isère, *A Treatise upon the Diseases and Hygiene of the Organ of the Voice* (Boston: J. F. W. Lane, 1857), 17.
89. Jacqueline Carroy, *Hypnose, Suggestion et Psychologie: L'invention de Sujets* [Hypnosis, suggestion, and psychology: The invention of subjects] (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991); Kaat Wils, "Medical Hypnosis, Self and Society in Fin de Siècle Belgium," *Sartoniana* 31 (2018): 245–257, sarton2018_vol.31.book (ugent.be).
90. *The Granta*, 1 November 1890, 33.
91. Nicolas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.